

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON
4710 University Way NE, #214
Seattle, WA 98105

21 July 2005

Mike Gallagher, PBT Coordinator
Environmental Assessment Program
Department of Ecology

RE: Proposed PBT rule
Chapter 173-333 WAC

The League of Women Voters of Washington, a member of the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition, supports the statements and recommendations set forth in that letter. We support changes in the proposed rule that will make the rule stronger and more effective in reducing toxic exposures and resulting disabilities and injuries. On behalf of the League, I spoke at the public hearing held on July 13, 2005. This letter expands some on that earlier statement.

The specific changes we recommend are:

1. Include a list of all chemicals known to be harmful, in addition to the twenty-six specifically named in the draft plan to be phased out and eliminated. Harmful chemicals are not just limited to those named in the draft. The public needs to be informed about all of them so that, in advance of being listed for a Chemical Action Plan, voluntary efforts can be instituted to seek safer alternatives.

2. Specifically state that elimination of the use of the named chemical in Washington is the goal.

3. We support the inclusion of the language of the precautionary principle (WAC 173-333-140 (1)). We suggest that this would be stronger if the words "ecology believes that" were removed so that the statement reads "[h]owever, lack of full scientific consensus...."

4. Phthalates should be added to the list of toxins suitable for CAPs immediately. The discussion at the public hearing provided no valid reason why it should not be included. Studies and testing in recent years have shown the presence of this chemical in human body fluids. Inclusion of phthalates is a clear example of putting the principle in #3 into effect.

5. In light of phthalates the Department should revisit the issue of whether the criteria for identifying PBT status (WAC 173-333-320) are too high.

Several years ago the national League adopted a policy statement, based on League studies, entitled “Early Intervention for Children at Risk”. The focus of the study was on the factors in early childhood that promoted, or harmed, the child’s optimal development. Consideration was given to such obvious factors as the presence or absence of quality health care, the stability of the family, existence of abuse or neglect, quality of childcare, among others.

The result of that study was the following position statement:

“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children.”

In the work of the Department on this PBT plan, these are the issues that are at stake in your work. Increasingly, we are learning of the long-term and permanent harmful effects, especially to very young children, of exposures to a wide range of PBTs. By not eliminating the sources of these exposures we would be complicit in acts that fail to “promote the well being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children.”

One of the programs the League supports that promotes the full development of children is violence prevention. I submit to you that continued exposures of children to PBTs known to cause neurological and other injury to children is a form of violence that must stop.

Most of us grew up with the saying, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” A modern restatement of that is the precautionary principle. This PBT rule is all about prevention and precaution which if fully implemented will significantly reduce harm to our children.

Please take the necessary actions to eliminate such exposures to persistent bioaccumulative toxins that permanently damage our children’s lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very important draft rule.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Davis
Chair, Natural Resources Committee

